

SECRET  
CIRCUIT NO. 12  
DATE 2/9/11  
SB 116

February 8, 2011

Dear Senators,

My name is Dr. Craig Treptow and I am a family practice physician working full time in Great Falls.

I stand opposed to physician assisted suicide and support Senator Hinkle's bill, SB 116.

The nature of our profession is to help patients heal and/or to reduce their suffering. It is not to help them kill themselves. Such a view of life has an underlying philosophy that states, "Killing is an acceptable answer to human suffering." It is a bright line in the sand that should never be crossed by a physician. From the beginnings of our profession with Hippocrates, through the Middle Ages with Maimonides to the previous century where the courageous Dutch physicians resisted the insidious Nazi philosophy of "Life unworthy of life," and into our current age with the American Medical Association, the dictum remains the same: Physician Assisted Suicide is unethical.

And why is that? The reasons are many. Consider this one example: In my practice the topic of PAS has come up on occasion. But the people who bring this topic up are not usually my patients. Instead, they are the children or relatives of my patients. They say, *"My grandmother is in the nursing home now with dementia and so can we do that physician assisted suicide on her?" "If it turns out my mother has cancer, I know she won't want to face it so can you prescribe those meds so she can take her own life?"* The risk of elder abuse, coercion, subtle psychological pressures on the elderly at the end of life, failure to diagnose and treat depression are all serious and real patterns of human behavior that can and will occur if we allow physician assisted suicide. It is a Pandora's box we should not open.

In Great Falls, we have a wonderful Hospice program that addresses the needs of patients who are dying. It provides support and care with the goal of comfort. It respects the human life of the dying person, instead of intentionally and unnaturally taking it away. Even those patients with unbearable pain can find relief with palliative sedation.

Senators, thank you for listening to me. Please protect our Montana citizens and support SB 116

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